

TAKE BODIES OF 167 FROM OPERA HOUSE

Over One-Third of Entire Audience Cremated in Boyertown Holocaust

**MOST OF VICTIMS
WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Believed That Nearly All the
Bodies Have Been Gotten Out,
and Efforts at Identification
Begin To-Day—Scores
Die in Seething
Furnace.

When nightfall put a stop to the work of recovering the dead from the ruins of the Rhodes Opera House, where last night's holocaust occurred, the official roll of victims numbered 167. Whether any more bodies are buried beneath the ruins cannot be positively stated, but it is believed that the total list of victims will not go above 175. The ratio of women and girls to men and boys is about nine to one. The work of identification will not be begun until to-morrow, as most of the bodies are still lying in a confused state at the four improvised morgues. The inhabitants of the little borough of Rhodes are now suffering from the

Everybody in the place either lost or more relatives, or was intimately acquainted with those who died in the fire. In several cases whole families have been wiped out.

Firemen at Night.

It was almost daylight this morning before the flames were extinguished and rescuers were able to enter the ruins to remove the dead. The morning was bitter cold, and by the time the denumbed and exhausted firemen began the task of disintangling the mass of burned masonry, the walls of the entire ruins were coated with ice and there was danger of the walls falling. It was 7 o'clock before the first body was removed.

Coroner Strasser, of Reading, who reached the scene last night, had a deputy of nearly thirty men to the bodies and keep a record of the description of every corpse removed. The bodies were

It is safe to say that not half the victims will ever be identified. The second victim was taken from the ruins about half an hour after the first, and then the work of recovery moved more rapidly. By noon, the rescuers became thoroughly exhausted from the cold and hard work, and for a time work came almost to a standstill.

The Philadelphia and Reading Company sent W. H. Keffer, superintendent of the Reading Company, and Mr. Keffer offered the company's assistance.

Coroner Strasser immediately availed himself of the railroad's proffer. Within an hour the company had two carloads of laborers and carpenters on the ground, and the work of recovering the bodies moved so rapidly that victims were being taken from the ruins at the rate of two every five minutes.

No Action Taken

There were many different stories as to the exact cause of the panic and fire, and there were several rumors of arrests, but the borough officials and Coroner Strasser to-night denied that any action whatever had been taken. The coroner said that his one thought was to get out all the bodies before a

ated on the second floor of a three-story brick building. The first floor was occupied by a national bank and several stores, and the third floor was used for lodge rooms. The entertainment hall had a stage about 100 feet long, fifty feet wide and seventy-five feet high. It had no gallery. There was a staircase at the front of the building and a narrow exit in the rear of the stage. Two escape routes were built on both sides and on the front of the room. So far as can be learned there were about 425 persons packed in the room, most of whom were adults. The number of children present was comparatively small, about sixty-five persons, all local talent, and a few persons, who were giving a performance of the Scotch Lullabion.

platform near the front entrance of the building and at the back of the audience. The light was in charge of H. W. Fisher, of Carlisle, Pa., and he says a rubber tubing slipped from one of the tanks. At any rate there was a loud hissing sound, which caused many in the audience to turn their heads in curiosity to see what it was. There was absolutely no panic up to this

performing, the curtain had not been pulled back. Curious to learn what was going on, the audience, one of the performers raised the curtain from the floor. In front of the curtain and serving as footlights, was a tank, perhaps eight feet long, three feet wide and three inches high. It contained oil and lights. In raising the curtain the performer accidentally turned this tank over and it fell to the floor within a few feet of some of the persons in the front row. The tank, which was the property of St. John's Lutheran Church, was the benefit of whose Sunday school the entertainment was being given, tried to pick up the tank with the assistance of the others, but before they could do so the oil flowed out and caught fire.

John J. Van Der Kolk, one of the men who saw the accident, said that the tank was about 10 feet long and 3 feet wide and 3 inches high. It was filled with kerosene and had a small fire burning in it. When the curtain was pulled back, the tank fell over and the kerosene spilled out and caught fire.

Then came the inevitable cry of fire. Eye-witnesses say that the audience

All attempted it, but few got out. The seats in the centre of the hall were of the usual folding variety, screwed to the floor, while those along the sides of the wall were loose chairs. In the scramble to get out many persons fell over the chairs and were unable to regain their feet. Those who did reach the front entrance found it